

Ogden Memorial Presbyterian Church Bicentennial Celebration Remarks

Mayor Thaddeus J. Kobylarz

October 21, 2023

Greetings everybody. I am delighted to be here with you today to help celebrate this very special milestone.

The Ogden Memorial Presbyterian Church has served the Chatham community for two hundred years now, and it has been a mainstay on the corner of Elmwood Avenue and Main Street here since the year 1905.

I know that I speak for all of Chatham in congratulating you, its congregants, on the bicentennial anniversary of this remarkable institution.

I am of Polish descent. On our birthdays, it is customary to wish one “sto lat”, which in this context means “may you live a hundred years” or perhaps even “may you live another one hundred years.” In this instance, I’d like to wish this wonderful organization “dwieście lat”, which can be understood as “may you live (at least) another two hundred years!”

On this extraordinary occasion, I am reminded of Alexis de Tocqueville, who wrote in his classic work *Democracy in America* (nearly 200 years ago itself, in 1831) of the tremendous importance of non-governmental associations, including religious congregations, in serving as the cornerstones of America’s social fabric and moral progress.

The Ogden Church has certainly been that, a cornerstone of the social fabric right here in Chatham, and an unfaltering promoter of its moral progress, throughout the past two hundred years.

Indeed, a cursory glance at its website is evidence enough of the extraordinary role played by Ogden’s laudably community-minded congregation in promoting the well-being of our town.

For, in addition to its very important pastoral work, the Ogden Church’s mission includes such items as the following:

- Hosting the Ogden Junior Preschool.
- Sponsoring the “Work-Family Connection” enrichment program for local schoolchildren.
- Housing the Montessori Children’s Academy.
- Headquartering Boy Scout Troop 8.
- Hosting an Alcoholics Anonymous chapter.
- Conducting the Operation Christmas Child program, which collects Christmas gifts for children who otherwise would go without.
- Collecting donations of food and toiletries for the Jersey Battered Women’s Service.
- Supporting the Mears Ministry in Haiti.
- Running the Sewing for Missions program.
- And so much more...

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In much this way, the Ogden Memorial Presbyterian Church has been a beacon of hope and service for the greater Chatham community for each of its two hundred years.

We are privileged beyond words to have you here among us. And we look forward to (at the very least) *another* two hundred years of your valuable commitment and engagement here in Chatham.

So, *dwieście lat* to you all! May you continue to bless us with your presence and beneficence for many years to come. Thank you so much for all that you've done, and continue to do, for our wonderful community. And may God bless you all.

Mayor Thaddeus J. Kobylarz